



Geographic profiling - lecture notes with additional reading and references

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Geographic profiling

A geographic profiler will never solve the crime

Focuses on the offender's home address / work place / travel patterns - what is it about the time and location of the offences that can tell us about the offender.

What led up to the offence – what was the victim doing before the offence / did the offender move the victim to another location to attack the victim / where did they go after – what were their escape routes.

If 2 offenders are working together their decisions are made jointly, so the geographic locations they chose will be based on places they both know.

Why geography?

- We build up knowledge of our surroundings from a young age, we build up an understanding of what places are familiar to us.
- Criminals base their crime activity and offending around places they know.

Theories:

- Least effort principle – you are more likely to go to the closest location to you – offenders don't travel further than they have to, to commit a crime.
- Distance decay – there is a buffer zone which is a distance either side of a person's residence where they should travel further from to avoid detection

Routine activity theory – they don't offend against a suitable target / they usually do not have any suitable guardian – what location brings these together to make the offender what to offend?

Time and geography go very closely together when seeing why / where people offend

Places where there aren't any crimes are target areas that an offender may not have any knowledge of so will not offend there.

Search and attack methods – helps to categorise offenders

- Search: a hunter / someone who will commute / troller – someone who will opportunity attack victims / trapper – use their power or occupation to come into contact with their victim
- Attacker: a stalker – will follow someone to a quieter location to attack victim (there would be a common area between where the offender has been and where the victims have been – that is where they came into contact)/ someone who will entice and then ambush their victim

Rational choice theory – cost / benefit analysis. The offender at some point has to weight up what they want to get out from the offences, and if this opportunity to attack will get them what they want at the time in that location.

- This involves planning

Decision to commit crime:

- Selected area – easy access location / has few police patrols in the area / lower security houses with large gardens to hide in

Different motivation and choice:

There are a number of different reasons why someone may commit a crime.

Types of crime sites:

- Some offences happen all at one scene – e.g. attacks victim, sexually assaults her and robs her, then leaves her there.
- Property deposition site – clothing stolen, weapons are stolen
- Communication site – the offender has used the victims phone – can tell us where the offender has been
- Credit card usage – the machine the offender has chosen when there is a large selection in the area, tells us something about the offender – where they've been/ what they are doing.

Offenders are quite consistent within their crime scene combinations, they tend to stick to the patterns they have used for other offences.

Development of geographic profiling:

- Kim Rossmo developed an investigative methodology to determine the most probable location of an offender's residence from an analysis of the crime scene.
- This is put into a computer system tool called Rigel – it is commercially available and used by geographic profilers in the UK.
- Operation Lynx (in the 1980's and 90's) – 5 lone females were attacked by an offender in their own car and driven to a different location (a lot of geographic movement – where the offender picks their victim / where they move to attack them / where they decide to dump and leave them). The offences spanned over 600 square miles. The offences were linked by DNA. Convicted the offender has as worked and lived in the 5% area of the algorithm carried out.

Technology can only go so far, it does not allow for underlying demographics / offender search methods / victim and offender movement / type of crime or crime location.